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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4194

INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000901

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/SUSSES, AF A/S CARSON, AF/C

NSC FOR MGAVIN

DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINS SU

SUBJECT: PRO-REGIME IDP LEADER MURDERED IN ABU SHOUK CAMP

REF: A) KHARTOUM 594,

B) KHARTOUM 697,

C) 08 KHARTOUM 1289

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A prominent pro-regime IDP leader in Abu Shouk Camp was murdered in the early morning of August 2, according to IDP and UN sources. Omer Adam Ishaq, known as "Saroukh", was shot and killed along with his wife by unknown gunmen at his home. Reasons for the attack are unknown pending further investigation. However, some IDPs have suggested Saroukh's alleged involvement in a government crackdown on Abu Shouk marketplace and his attempt to regulate commerce in the camp as possible motives. GOS police are investigating the incident. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Abdallah Adam Al Basher, Abu Shouk Resident and Member of the Fur Shura Council in North Darfur, told polasst on August 2 that Saroukh, an Umda (community leader) from the Fur tribe, was known for strong pro-regime views. According to Al Basher, Saroukh had recently antagonized some members of the IDP community with his role in a government attempt to regulate commerce in Abu Shouk market and to crack down on illegal activities there. Al Basher stated that the day before Saroukh's murder, approximately 40 Toyota Landcruisers filled with police and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) raided the market looking for contraband, searching stores, arresting numerous merchants, and confiscating diesel and gasoline fuel. The perception among the merchant community was that Saroukh was involved, said Al Basher, and later that night Saroukh and his wife were killed.

¶3. (SBU) UNAMID Civil Affairs sources confirmed to Poloff on August 3 that Saroukh was head of the Abu Shouk Market Planning Committee, an entity established by the Commissioner of El Fasher approximately three weeks ago to regulate commerce in the camp. The Committee had commenced work in delineating the market area to contain its sprawl, and apparently gave some merchants orders to evacuate certain locales. Further plans were underway to tax merchants for engaging in commercial activity, as is done in El Fasher market. This annoyed shop owners, who argued that the government provided no services to the market to justify payment of taxes. The police raid on the market further exacerbated tensions, they said.

¶4. (SBU) Al Basher told Poloff that Saroukh remained an unpopular figure in Abu Shouk camp due to his role in coordinating the spraying of insecticide that sickened several women in April 2009 and led to several days of unrest in the camp (Ref A). He also apparently caused a stir by inviting the Wali of North Darfur to lead Eid prayers in Abu Shouk in 2007, which was met with violent protest from camp youth. While the Wali's convoy managed to escape their stone throwing, Saroukh was beaten and taken to a hospital for medical care.

¶5. (SBU) Saroukh had previously met Senators Isakson and Corker in their May 2009 visit to Abu Shouk (Ref B). During the meeting, the tall Saroukh adopted a pragmatic tone towards both the government

and the international community. He told the CODEL that fighting had displaced his family from Jebel Si in April 2004, and while they intended to return someday, the security situation in North Darfur prevented them from leaving Abu Shouk. "At the beginning, it was an emergency, but it is a little better now," he added, thanking the international community for its efforts in Darfur. Addressing the expulsion of thirteen humanitarian NGOs in March 2009, Saroukh praised UNICEF and the GOS Ministry of Health for stepping in to run clinics and sanitation operations in the camp of approximately 40,000 mostly Fur IDPs. "I am hopeful the government and the movements will work to bring peace," he told Senators Corker and Isakson. "My family doesn't want to live in this camp. We want to go home."

¶6. (SBU) Comment: It is unclear whether the attempted crackdown on Abu Shouk market is the action of local officials or a major operation planned from Khartoum. In either case, raids on IDP camps tend to galvanize local feelings against the regime and further exacerbate tensions, often with disastrous results. An August 2008 Sudanese Armed Forces attempt to search for weapons in Kalma IDP camp outside of Nyala in South Darfur resulted in the deaths of dozens of civilians, including women and children (Ref C).

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